

JR MCKENZIE TRUST

ESTABLISHED IN 1940

**Supporting Refugee Resettlement: Refugee Employment
Programme.**

What Have We Learned So Far?

A Report on the First Two Years of a Three Year Programme.

April 2004

1. Introduction

In 2001 the JR McKenzie Trust Board decided to support refugee resettlement in New Zealand through their Innovative Grants Programme. The Innovative Fund supports significant projects, in ways wider than but including the granting of funds. It aims to support projects which are new, imaginative and creative in the way they address a social problem.

Late in 2001 the JR McKenzie Trust invited proposals for projects from refugee support and community organisations to assist refugees, and other recent immigrants to New Zealand from refugee-like circumstances, increase access to and continue in employment. Projects commenced in 2002. The organisations involved were expected to monitor and evaluate their project, share what they learn and involve refugees themselves in all aspects of the project (from planning to evaluation). Priority was also given to applicants working in collaboration with other organizations. The Trust committed funding for up to three years and committed support for organisations to learn through their projects.

The aims of the programme are:

- To increase the number of refugees who gain and maintain employment, including self-employment.
- To promote sharing and collaboration within the sector, and between refugee resettlement organisations and other services. To increase knowledge of what works well in the New Zealand context in this area. In particular, to identify and describe the factors that support refugees to gain and continue in employment in New Zealand.
- To promote a “learning culture” among refugee resettlement and support organisations. To increase monitoring and evaluation of programmes within refugee services, in order to increase knowledge of what works well in the New Zealand context.

In addition to making grants of between \$10,000 and \$25,000 per year, the Trust has provided resources for four annual workshops to be held at the start and end of each year of the programme facilitated by an external facilitator experienced in refugee policy and resettlement issues as well as monitoring and evaluation. The facilitator is also available for a day a year to each project to provide support for project monitoring and evaluation. In this way grantees are not put in the awkward position of receiving assistance directly from the funder, nor of having to “spend” part of their project funding on assistance. There is also budgetary provision for each organization to monitor its project, although none of this money has been used in the two years of the programme to date.

Additional grants have been made to some of the projects by other funding organisations interested in supporting the programme.

This report covers what we have learnt together after the first two years of the three-year programme.

2. The Projects

Five grants were originally made by the JR Mc Kenzie Trust to support projects with diverse aims and methods planned for achieving them. In late 2003 the Trust awarded another grant to a refugee employment programme to a refugee community group. There are now three projects in Auckland, and one each in Christchurch, Wellington and Hamilton. (Annexe 1 contains a list of all project holders and their contacts)

Some changes of approach have come about during the two years of the project, often through greater focus on a particular group or in response to a changed policy or employment environment.

- In 2003 two programmes employed an employment broker to work with local employers to find jobs for refugees, as well as providing mentoring support and referral to assistance with English language. In 2002 one of these projects was run jointly by two agencies, but with one organization withdrawing from the programme at the end of the year, the other agency now has complete responsibility for the project.
- Another project recruits and trains volunteer mentors to assist refugees through the process of finding and keeping work, although this matching still occurs in some cases, more work is being done by the project staff to achieve employment or training goals.
- The project which initially sought to provide support to women seeking to set up small businesses to supplement their family's income changed their objective to facilitating the participation of refugee and refugee-like women in New Zealand's economy and society through access to employment or self employment. This will allow the programme to respond to the specific needs and aspirations of refugee and refugee-like women gain employment and self-employment.
- Finally, as well as seeking to place refugees in work, one project seeks to develop a good practice model for refugee employment.

3. Programme Workshops

At the end of each year of the programme, one manager and one staff member from each project attend a two-day workshop. The workshop at the end of the second year aimed:

1. To promote sharing and collaboration between project grant holders
2. To review progress in our projects
3. To share and discuss the problems we face implementing the projects
4. To discuss, share and learn more about monitoring and evaluation methods and systems
5. To refine plans for 2004 and beyond.

As we are all working in a very localised context, the workshops have provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on and process our work at a more generalised level. If we look at employment programmes in general they usually involve or can be placed in one of four categories.

- a) *Programmes which focus on employability* attempt to facilitate access to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated. This is the main focus of most of our projects.
- b) *Entrepreneurship programmes* attempt to open up the business creation process to all by providing the tools required for setting up businesses and for the identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment. Two projects working with refugee women have some aspects of entrepreneurship although they have proceeded cautiously as discussed below.
- c) *Programmes focussing on adaptability* promote lifelong learning to encourage the retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market. Again, two projects partly focus on adaptability over a period of time and have found the need to case manage participants over a longer period of time than originally intended.

- d) *Equal Opportunity programmes* promote potential for all within the world of work. All our projects have some equal employment components, but this is usually in conjunction with other projects run by our organisations. The aim of these aspects of the projects is to show employers the positive sides of refugee communities, to pre-empt or counter negative publicity and inaccuracies which often emanate from politicians adept at using the media. The sort of publicity they generate deeply troubles many we work with and for. Next year we plan to be more involved as a group in policy advocacy and this could well increase the EEO component of our projects.

4. What Our Projects Have Achieved So Far

More progress was made in the second year of the programme than in the first, when progress was slower than anticipated. Our progress seems to be due to increased skill and contacts among the project service providers and an increased awareness of the projects among refugees groups and communities and other agencies. Although finding a job is a long process requiring dedication on behalf of the refugees and those working with them in the second year of the programme we have achieved:

- Work Outcomes
 - About 120 refugees in fulltime or part time employment
 - 4 people have become self employed. One start up business has had many flow on effects including family reunification, purchasing a house and business expansion.
 - Work experiences secured to help refugees become self-employed.
 - Venture capital secured to support people into enterprise activity.
 - Strategies for self employment developed
- Positive alliances formed with other agencies and training providers
 - Relationships formed with teams of independent job brokers who have good relationships with employers but less experience of working with refugees.
 - Positive relationships formed with some individual WINZ case managers and positive relationships formed at regional or office management levels. Nevertheless not all relationships with WINZ are positive. We put this down to the high turnover of WINZ staff, the high numbers of clients WINZ case managers generally handle, their lack of knowledge of refugees' general situation (and the lack of opportunities to find out about their backgrounds) and therefore the unrealistic expectations they have of refugees. How to develop and maintain a positive relationship with WINZ case managers is a question we often ask ourselves as many of us believe WINZ support for our projects is crucial because of the number of refugees on benefits and WINZ relationships with a wide range of employers.
 - Positive relationships (some formalised through memoranda of understanding) with private providers who provide further English language teaching and other adult education.
 - In one city an employment sub group has been formed involving representatives from a number of agencies involved in employment programmes and initiatives.
 - Relationships with budget advisory services who can explain benefit entitlements to refugees moving into employment.
- Networking

- Positive relationships formed with employers with multiple vacancies in one work place which can be filled by groups of refugees. Those with better English can assist those with little English meet the employer's expectations.
- Strong relationships established with other refugee assisting NGOs and agencies
- In Christchurch the project holders hosted and jointly funded a forum attended by WINZ, the Chamber of Commerce, New Zealand Immigration Service, Employers and Refugee and Migrant agencies and the Community Employment Group to encourage interest in our work and highlight the ethnic diversity of Christchurch's workforce and potential workforce.
- A positive relationship developed between one project and a local newspaper
- Networking with Refugee Communities
 - Consultations with groups of refugees to discuss fears, aspirations, needs and goals (both short and long term).
 - Helping to achieve a degree of unity in a diverse and fragmented group of different cultures to enable potential clients to be more aware of employment opportunities
 - Several project holder organizations have structural links with refugee communities at an organisational level, either through Board membership or regular attendance at various resettlement fora.
- Referrals to further training
 - 71 people were referred to English, further education or skills courses, work experience and volunteering. However there were fewer opportunities for work experience in the second year of the programme than in the first because of the introduction of new OSH regulations.
- Exploring non traditional refugee employment options
 - One project has begun to explore opening up the horizons for refugee employment especially in the building and roading industry. These are areas with huge skills shortages but training opportunities available.
- Levering additional resources.
 - Throughout the programme organisations have used the resources obtained through the JR McKenzie Trust to seek and secure additional resources from other funders. This has enabled us to expand the scope and in some places geographical reach of our projects, or develop complementary projects.

5. What Have We Learned in the first Two Years of the Programme?

All of the projects got off to a slower start than any of us expected. This is likely to be due to a number of factors: the context in which we are working, the time it took to consult with refugees, recruit the right people to work on the projects and the time it has taken to build alliances with potential employers and other service providers.

5.1 Learning about Refugee Employment in general.

We have learned a lot from implementing the programme. As well as learning from each other's experience, we have also benefited from the experience of refugee

service providers in Australia, Europe and North America. Some of that experience is captured in the Internet sites listed in Annexe 2.

5.1.1 Labour Market statistics

Unemployment in New Zealand over the last two years has been about 5% with the strongest labour market in 15 years. Yet WINZ statistics show that on average refugees remain on a benefit for three years before they move into fulltime work and more than 6,500 or 86% of migrants and refugees in Auckland have been receiving a benefit for longer than six months. This means our client group is one of the most marginalised in terms of the employment market.

5.1.2 The Need for Individualised Approaches

Some of our projects were too ambitious at the outset and thought that larger numbers of clients could be assisted if we worked with groups from within each community. However we soon realised that individualised approaches were essential. This places strains on our resources as we work to increase peoples' self confidence and motivation and provide post placement support. This has reduced the number of people some projects had hoped to assist. However being able to maintain contact with job seekers over a multi year project has been beneficial as the following example shows.

Through one of our projects, two Afghani women with very little English went on an entry level computer course. Once they completed it they came back to the project for further assistance. They were referred to an Intermediate English class. They then returned to the project organization and were enrolled in further computing courses. One of the women is now attending and will soon complete a Teacher Aide course and the other has a job in a call centre. Here she has contact with the public over the phone, so wearing a head scarf is not an issue. The women know they can come back to the project for ongoing support. The project staff has kept in touch with them and they in turn have encouraged other women to join the project. Without the assistance of the project over a two year period we doubt either of the women would have gained employment suited to their needs and interest. Gaining suitable employment takes time!

5.2 Barriers to Employment

We have found refugees face a number of barriers in gaining and sustaining employment.

- *The Attitude of Employers* is crucial, yet negative attitudes from some employers are a significant barrier. We have found that on the whole employers are more receptive to employing migrants than refugees; and even then there are many reports of discrimination against migrants also. Even when employers are open to refugees, the demands of running a small business in New Zealand seems to mean that they don't have the time it takes to help an individual with transferable skills come up to speed in the market. On the other hand, when employers have had a successful experience with a few refugee employers, this has often opened the door for others. In these circumstances, we've found a direct approach to employers has proved to be the most effective way of gaining employment for clients.

Some employers hesitate to employ refugees for fear of complications evolving around OSH legislation in work places. Often the issue boils down to

English language competency and a concern that refugee employees will not understand health and safety guidelines, leaving employers liable for any accidents. OSH requirements have also limited the availability of volunteer work placements or work experience opportunities.

- *Discrimination*
 - *OSH requirements* are a genuine obstacle for semi literate workers or those with low levels of English; however it seems OSH requirements are sometimes used to mask discriminatory practices or used as an excuse not to employ refugees. Muslim women who wish to wear a head scarf often meet resistance on OSH grounds, yet the scarf is no barrier in many situations.
 - The level of *discrimination encountered appears to increase with the skill level of the job*. Several project holders noted the economic cost of New Zealand educated refugees, especially young people, moving to Australia or the US after a frustrating period of being unable to obtain employment here. In some communities there are more young female graduates than men. If they are Muslim they face double discrimination because of their label as refugees and their dress.
 - *WINZ staff*. In some areas, there are now more WINZ staff employed with specialised skills and knowledge of refugee and migrant communities than when we began our projects two years ago. However project staff still observe punitive views of refugees among some WINZ staff. There is a perception among several project staff that the main concern of WINZ staff is getting people off benefits rather than ensuring the quality of work outcomes. Where WINZ has been able to place case managers on site in Refugee and Migrant Centres, significantly better relationships have developed.
- *Impact of initial resettlement placement*. Where a refugee is resettled often assists or places a barrier to readily accessing employment. Those who live in residential suburbs, especially in Auckland, with few large scale employers or distant from industrial areas offering lower skill level jobs, often lack employment opportunities. It is very difficult to develop a relationship with the employer, and the travel costs involved in getting to work make low-paid work a financially unviable option.
- *Basic wage* Until the recent announcement of an increase in the basic wage to \$9.00 per hour, many refugees had been working for \$8.50 to \$9.00 an hour with no increase in four years. Yet during that time the cost of living, and travel costs had increased steadily. Project holders welcome the increase and the changes to be announced in the Budget designed to ensure that families with dependent children are always better off when in work. However we are concerned the impact of the increases will take some time to manifest itself. Currently those employed at an initial rate of say \$8.10 an hour get regular increments until about the \$9.00 mark. We are unsure if employers will pay any increments on a starting wage of \$9.00 an hour, which experience shows us is too low for those who travel any distance to work or are supporting a family. Most of us feel there are currently insufficient incentives or encouragement for refugees to move from benefit. Those on benefit can collect children from school and take care of their family. If they are working they are unable to do this. To give up providing this level of care there must be a realistic incentive for them to work, relative to a benefit. In addition to incentives to move from the benefit those running projects often feel frustrated at how difficult it is for refugees entering the workforce to find

out about their ongoing benefit entitlements and then access them. (Often this is a result of the discrimination outlined above). This also limits people's motivation to take up part time work which frequently leads to fulltime employment.

- *Lack of Appropriate Educational Opportunities*

- *English language*

All of us agree that lack of access to appropriate English classes continues to hamper refugees' access to employment. It is the most striking common experience of our projects. Even when refugees have been successful in gaining employment, they are often confined to low skill level jobs. Progressing from them requires increased literacy skills and there are few opportunities to obtain these. The waste of potential is illustrated by poignant anecdotes of Vietnamese and Lao employees who came to New Zealand 20 years ago and are in low-skill jobs for life, despite their early potential to develop further.

- *Need for appropriate education*

In the past, in some places, some refugees have attended TOPS courses which haven't led to sustainable employment outcomes. These courses are now talked down in the community and many are reluctant to attend them. In other areas TOPS programmes have been a success and sustainable employment outcomes have been achieved.

- *Workplace Culture*

A lesson continually being learnt is the paramount importance of ensuring refugees are au fait with New Zealand work place culture. Progress could be further enhanced if resources could be found for bi-lingual awareness-raising to occur in ethnic specific focus groups. Examples of barriers include:

- *Limited knowledge of careers and work options available.*

Often refugees have narrow horizons in terms of employment aspirations. With limited knowledge and access to information about the range of work options and occupations available in New Zealand, they may develop (often unrealistic) aspirations to professional jobs or feel confined to low skill level jobs. There is little knowledge of the trades. Refugees are now able to access TEC training more readily so this should slowly begin to turn this situation around if people are appropriately directed and supported through the process.

- *Difficulty in adapting to New Zealand workplace culture:*

For some refugees it takes time to adapt to the New Zealand workplace culture. For example, although Muslim women often face baseless discrimination regarding their dress, there are some occasions when it is dangerous or considered to obstruct communication (if they have their face fully covered). Some projects have sought to find a compromise in this area. Some men from very different cultures find it difficult to be subordinate to a woman in the workplace. Different cultures regard age differently. For some communities those in their forties and certainly those in their fifties do not consider it appropriate to vigorously explore employment. For some, differing attitudes to time means keeping appointments or arriving for appointments on time is not a priority - with negative results!

- *Lack of self confidence or motivation*

Past experience of terror has often sapped refugees' self confidence and left them with little motivation or hope for the future after the initial honeymoon period of resettlement wears off. All our projects must help rekindle confidence and hope and encourage people to set out on a pathway to finding employment, and sticking with it. This is difficult when many stressors weigh on them, or when an erosion of hope means even young people see it as a risk to leave (the limited safety of) the benefit and embark on fulltime work.

5.3 Groups with special needs

Our work has confirmed the special needs of two particular groups of refugees; women and young people.

Refugee Women

We have found that women from cultures where women are traditionally disadvantaged in terms of access to education are also disadvantaged in relation to the men in learning English and gaining employment in New Zealand. Many refugee women are in this situation and find it difficult to access English classes. Most of the women have small children and are unable to work, travel or participate in any activities without childcare support.

Women without partners are particularly concerned about losing their benefit as a result of employment or starting small own businesses. And they often lack self-esteem.

This has led to several projects exploring the possibility of refugee women earning money through home based employment associated with rotational credit schemes to support the initial investment.

Young People

Some projects have increased their focus on young people and have found this time consuming. Many have left school unprepared for employment; even such basics as a CV need preparation. Those who arrive in New Zealand as teenagers are known to be a high risk group and one which will need more attention in future. Their parents often have unrealistic expectations of them, expecting they will enter the professions. With a lack of knowledge of work opportunities, they are unable to provide them with the necessary guidance.

5.4 Challenges to NGOs running employment programmes.

Our own organisations have met some unexpected challenges by extending into refugee employment services. One of our aims was to encourage learning in participating organisations, so we have been quite open in our debates with each other over these things in the hope that others will also benefit from them. We hope sharing our experiences of barriers and stresses doesn't appear negative, but too often NGOs are required to only share positive stories and it can be risky to share difficulties.

A number of the participating organizations have worked with refugees for many years, but mainly in the field of education. Others have worked with migrants but refugees are a new client group for them.

An ongoing challenge for all of us is to develop a range of interventions to reflect the fact that refugees are not a homogeneous group with respect to employment, language and educational backgrounds and aspirations, and importantly their capacity to seek, gain and maintain employment and/or further training. This

challenges organisations at all levels. Some have found building rapport with a range of employers more difficult than we first thought. Others have found it difficult, initially at least, to convince their colleagues of the efficacy of our approach or maintain ongoing relationships with refugees at a community level.

Those generally working with migrants have realized that the specialist competencies required to work with refugees are not necessarily the same as those for working with migrants. Assigning personnel to refugee services has to be carefully managed and staff need a certain skill and attitude set to be appropriate.

Using a job broker or mentoring approach has placed unexpected demands on all our organisations, and finding the right person for the job as mentor or job broker has proved more difficult than many of us thought it would be. As organisations we have had to learn how to manage and support job brokers. The demand for services often outstrips our ability to respond. Yet through our projects we have raised the profile of employment issues and therefore expectations of our ability to respond.

Some projects are run by education based organisations. It was a big shift in attitude for some teachers to accept a different focus as core to the organization's work, and some were resistant initially. However as refugees began to get jobs their position changed. In these sorts of organisational matters the role of active Boards who support the ideas behind our projects has been vital.

In all our organisations, the J R McKenzie Trust supported project runs alongside several others, some of which are complementary. Each funder has differing reporting requirements and funding cycles all requiring active management. However project holders have responded positively to the J R Mc Kenzie approach of looking at a wider range of outcomes rather than just quantitative measures of people in jobs.

Responding to changes in government policy direction in the contracting environment, i.e. NZIS and TEC, continues to prove a challenge. Even though some government contracts are attempting to move to measures of outcome rather than output (although the indicators of success are somewhat rudimentary), the pressure to achieve high outputs and outcomes has constrained enrolments onto some complementary programmes, meaning they are unable to respond to the most marginalised groups.

Project holders have proved they are strong organisations, yet they are also fragile. As discussed, they are vulnerable to changes in government policies in regards to employment, funding and contracting of organisations in the voluntary sector. They generally have a small staff, with most employed on a project by project basis, so recruiting the right people with the right level of competencies and experience is often a tall order. Therefore they are subject to the same critical human resource incidents that all organisations face from time to time, resulting in tensions and sometimes high levels of staff turnover at times of restructuring.

6. Involving Refugees

The idea of refugee participation in all levels of service planning and delivery is new to most of the participating organizations on the programme and is not yet second nature in organisational terms. This needs to be seen against a culture and history of a lack of refugee participation in service agencies, although this is slowly changing. Obviously there are levels of participation which can be aspired to in any project. Initially many of us underestimated how much time (and money) was involved in ensuring participation and have realised that the process is rarely straightforward.

We have had a number of discussions about the nature of consultation, who you consult and how. This issue is an ongoing challenge as communities establish themselves and rightly expect to be active members of New Zealand society, and agencies gain new skills and think about issues in a different way. Most organizations have now developed greater trust with communities. But if a breach of trust occurs within an existing relationship, rebuilding it is very time consuming and often requires painful self-reflection for organisations.

On the whole project holders have gained greater insight into how refugee communities operate, including the tensions within them. We have become more aware of the different perspectives held by different community members; leaders, religious leaders, those already successfully employed or running businesses, and the need to involve a range of people, not just one prominent or vocal group. Refugee communities are not homogenous, often being riven with the same tensions and disputes that drove them from their homelands. In some cases, our projects have helped draw various groups together, by taking an individualised approach, but the depth of tension within some communities initially came as a surprise to some.

One project employed three refugees to speak to potential employees by phone or face-to-face in Somali, Arabic / Assyrian and Amharic to find out about their level of interest in catering work as a part of a business feasibility study. Others have debated project personnel recruitment policies internally; should we or should we not employ former refugees as a matter of principle?

We welcome the addition of the Auckland Somali Community Association to the 2004 programme as we will all learn a lot from a refugee-based organization providing services to its own community.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 Project Level Monitoring

At the beginning of programme we assumed that developing monitoring and evaluation systems and techniques would be a key area of organisational development assistance required by the agencies participating. It has certainly been an area which provides an ongoing challenge to us all. For instance, through workshop discussions we learned that only one of the projects has kept disaggregated data on project participation by gender. Yet on reflection we found participation in most projects was dominated by men, even though all project holders are well aware of the resettlement difficulties faced by women. (Although one project noted that women's participation increased in 2003). Those who work with migrants have not been always been able to identify who is a refugee among those accessing general services. To address this, one group reorganised its database so that it can now track refugee participation in all of its services.

What we didn't anticipate at a programme management level were the other sorts of support which agencies have needed (technical and knowledge based) and how these, on a day to day basis, proved a priority for the agencies involved. We haven't made as much progress on monitoring and evaluation as we'd hoped.

7.2 At a Programme Level

It is difficult to monitor the overall effectiveness of our programme in terms of the increase in the number of refugees who have gained and maintained employment, as the only reliable measure is one that compares people on the programme with the same kind of people not on the programme; and it's very difficult to get those sorts of figures. Even if generalised figures were available, there are likely to be regional

differences which are difficult to assess. For example, in smaller cities, such as Christchurch or Hamilton, most refugees are referred to centralised Refugee and Migrant Support Centres and it is therefore reasonable to assume they will access services, including employment advice and support services, through them. In Auckland and Wellington however, refugee populations are more widespread throughout the city and accessing one service centre is not a viable option. What our programme has been able to do is support an area of refugee service delivery which has not previously had widespread attention.

The final report from the three year NZIS Refugee *Voices* research project which was set up to provide information about the experiences of refugees settling in New Zealand will be published in early 2004. This will provide us with more information on which to evaluate our programme at the end of three years.

One group which our project has not involved at all is those who have been granted refugee status after arriving in New Zealand (including those who have applied as asylum seekers). Yet the interim report of the Refugee *Voices* research project showed that this group had most difficulty getting paid work in New Zealand, with 68% of those interviewed reporting difficulties. The situation of asylum seekers living in the community on conditional release from detention pending a decision on their claims for refugee status is likely to be even grimmer as they do not have work permits, which are essential if they are to work legally in New Zealand. Support for asylum seekers could obviously be a priority in any future programme of this sort.

Support to Project holders

We have to admit it has sometimes been difficult to always keep the two channels of assistance (funding and advisory) separate, especially when we consider there is essentially only one staff member at the J R McKenzie Trust with responsibility for the programme oversight, and the contracted consultant sometimes (but not often) has more time available than he does, and she also has experience in providing broad assistance to NGOs. On the whole however, participants have valued the extra assistance and advice they receive either during the workshops or between them and the external consultant continually stresses she is not a representative of the J R McKenzie Trust.

The workshops have provided valuable opportunities to consider and wrestle with the challenges we face. Participants have rated them very positively, both for their own sake and as a way of adding value to the projects.

Nor do we doubt that we have filled an important gap in service delivery for refugees and next year we intend being more involved in policy advocacy. Why do we feel this? We are seeking to address an issue of fundamental concern to all New Zealanders. The right to an adequate standard of living, in which employment is a crucial factor, was among the top three most important human rights expressed by a cross section of all New Zealanders last year in the public consultations carried out as part of the development of the New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights, led by the Human Rights Commission. Further, there is no refugee specific job placement service in New Zealand and although NZIS has funded a few pilot projects to assist refugees find work, we have been able to build on these and increase their scope. Although there has been some limited discussion on refugee employment at the six-monthly Tripartite Talks¹, there have been limited opportunities for focused policy level discussions on refugee employment.

¹ The Tripartite Talks take place every six months and provide an opportunity for NGOs, government and UNHCR to meet and discuss issues of common concern.

8. Where to from Here?

We are now in the final year of the programme, and we have hopes that our services to refugees will continue to improve this year.

We are all hoping for better relationships with WINZ through their Multi-lingual Contact Centre established in October 2003². In Christchurch several agencies are currently in dialogue with WINZ regarding the placement of up to five caseworkers on site to respond to the needs of refugee and migrants. Such an arrangement would greatly enhance the service for refugees via the establishment of a cohesive “one stop shop” employment and general support service. In Auckland, project holders are hoping that there will be benefit from the intended increased awareness of refugee issues through the introduction of the Ministry of Social Development WINZ *Auckland Metropolitan Migrant and Refugee Strategy*. An important component of the strategy is the reduction in case loads for specialist case managers to provide more intensive one to one assistance for migrants and refugees. In Hamilton, project staff meet regularly with a forum of agencies involved in employment issues in the city.

Several projects supporting refugee women intend to proceed carefully with home based industry. They are cautious because of the inherent dangers associated with the exploitation of outworkers.

To date there have been few opportunities for dialogue with policy makers specifically focusing on refugee employment issues. As a group we have noticed that there is a lack of an overall approach to refugee education and employment in New Zealand. We hope to hold discussions in April between programme managers and one or two key WINZ staff with responsibilities in the area ahead of the May Tripartite talks. In this way we hope to feed our experience into policy formulation.

Throughout the year we will continue with our core work and gather more information on refugee employment to feed into an end of year conference. This will be a two day event. The first day will be a chance for participating organisations to share their experiences over three years in an informal setting. The second day will have a wider attendance and provide us all with an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of our projects and draw together recommendations for future action on the issues.

This J R McKenzie funded programme has provided reasonably large grants for localised support. The Trust is not likely to support a similar programmatic approach to refugee employment in future. Participating agencies have been aware of this since the outset, but in the current funding and contracting situation in regard to refugee issues in general and employment issues specifically, it will be a challenge to everyone to maintain the momentum of the past three years. We hope that we will have laid a foundation for future service delivery and policy development.

² The service already offers services to Arabic speakers and planning is underway to provide an additional five languages in the first half of 2004. Options to meet the language needs of smaller ethnic communities are being considered.

Annexe 1

JR MCKENZIE TRUST

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Refugee Resettlement Programme: *Access to Employment*

2004 Contact Addresses

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Waikato ESOL Home Tutor Scheme	Jenny Field Dorothy Thwaite	Waikato ESOL Home Tutor Scheme PO Box 4340 Hamilton	07 834 0940	whts@xtra.co.nz
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Auckland Somali Community Association	Mahad Warsame Hasan Mohamed Hasan	PO Box 27196 Mt Roskill Auckland	Mahad 021 366478	MahadW@adhb.govt.nz

Annexe 2: Useful Websites

British Refugee Council (2001) *Refugee Employment in Europe* Accessed on 1 December 2002

British Refugee Council (undated) *Good Practice Guide on the Integration of Refugees: Employment* Accessed at http://www.refugeenet.org/pdf/employment_guide.pdf on 1 December 2002

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